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UNCLAS BRATISLAVA 001110

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SUBJECT: GIL-ROBLES ON ILLEGAL STERILIZATION: CASE CLOSED

REF: A. PRAGUE 1616

[1](#)B. BRATISLAVA 1178

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[1](#)1. (U) Summary. Slovak Deputy PM Pal Csaky and the Council of Europe (COE) Commissioner for Human Rights discussed past investigations into alleged coerced sterilizations of Roma women and the newly approved health care reform package. The Commissioner stressed the need for diligence in strengthening all relevant legislation affecting minority groups. According to media reports, both officials said they considered this case closed. However, demands from the alleged victims for compensation continue, for example in a pending court case at the European Court of Human Rights. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) During a meeting on December 8, Deputy PM for Human Rights Pal Csaky and COE Commissioner for Human Rights Alvaro Gil-Robles discussed past allegations of coerced sterilizations of Roma women. The meeting occurred nearly two years after the publication of an NGO report describing over two hundred interviews with sterilized Roma women about their health care treatment. Csaky informed Gil-Robles about the results of the criminal and government investigations conducted and safeguards introduced into the medical system to further protect Roma (and all) women. A COE report issued in October 2003 included several recommendations about strengthening existing legislation and improving the regulations for informed consent. According to press reports, Gil-Robles confirmed he considered the case closed, but encouraged diligence in strengthening relevant legislation affecting minorities.

[1](#)3. (SBU) According to Jana Kviecinska, Director of the Human Rights Section at the Government Office, Csaky promised to meet with the COE after Parliament passed new health care reforms (reftel B) to address specific concerns raised in the 2003 report. In late September, Parliament adopted six laws in order to improve the quality of health care and its administration. Within the broad package of reform, the Ministry of Health (MOH) revamped the outdated regulations governing sterilization and included a detailed definition of informed consent. The Slovak Family Planning Association and the MOH Ethics Committee cooperated in drafting portions of the new laws and believe sterilization practices in Slovakia will be positively impacted. The changes to laws covering sterilization will become effective January 1, 2005.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Adriana Lamackova, a Slovak lawyer representing women claiming to have undergone coerced sterilization, stated the meeting may have been triggered by the submission of a new case to the European Court of Human Rights. The Slovak NGO Poradna, which co-authored the controversial report, recently submitted a case on the behalf of four Roma women. The case has been accepted by the court, thus the government is required to evaluate and provide comments on the case's merits.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Comment: While the issue may be closed in the dialogue between the COE and Slovakia, human rights activists continue to pursue cases in court and to open new investigations. The Slovak government appears to be cautiously observing the mood in the Czech Republic and the GOCR's handling of similar allegations that recently emerged (reftel A). The pending court cases show that the demand for compensation of alleged victims will persist, and the GOS will have to deal with the issue for some time to come, case closed or not.

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